

## NEWS FROM THE DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

May 4, 2010

Vol. 40, No. 145

For more information contact Tom Postell, Air Quality Management Section, 302-739-9402; William (Chip) McDaniel, Chief, Environmental Crimes Unit, 302-739-9401; or Melanie Rapp, Public Affairs, 302-739-9902.

### **Open burning prohibited May 1 – Sept. 30 to protect public health Ban coincides with ozone season when ground level-ozone can reach unhealthy levels**

DNREC reminds Delawareans that open burning is prohibited statewide from May 1 through Sept. 30 to protect public health. The only exceptions to Delaware's open burning ban are cooking fires (BBQs), recreational campfires and ceremonial fires. All other burning activities are restricted during ozone season.

Open burning contributes to the formation of ground-level ozone and fine particle pollution by producing smoke and toxic chemicals that can trigger asthma attacks and other respiratory problems," said Tom Postell, environmental program manager. "The ban coincides with the beginning of ozone season when ground-level ozone can reach unhealthy levels."

Ground-level ozone, a colorless gas, is formed from a chemical reaction in the lower atmosphere on hot, still sunny days. The air pollutants contributing most to ozone formation are volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NOx). There are many sources of VOCs and NOx in Delaware, including large and small industrial facilities, gasoline vapors, vehicle exhaust, chemical solvents and natural sources. Also, many of these compounds are blown in from upwind areas such as Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

Ground-level ozone can damage lung tissue, aggravate respiratory conditions and make people more susceptible to other respiratory infections. Children are especially vulnerable to ozone's harmful effects. The number of days with "unhealthy" levels of ozone has been [declining](#) in Delaware for more than a decade. This is largely due to pollution control and prevention programs, including tougher emission controls on large industries, cleaner-running cars, vehicle emissions inspection programs and [reformulated gasoline](#).

Chief of DNREC's Environmental Crimes Unit, William (Chip) McDaniel, warns that Environmental Protection Officers are on the lookout for violators and will be citing those performing illegal open burning activities. Penalties range from \$100 to \$500 in fines, plus a criminal record. To report illegal open burning, call the 24-hour hotline in Delaware at 1-800-662-8802. Verizon wireless customers in Delaware can call, toll free: #DNR (367).

Alternatives to open burning include composting, chipping and other forms of recycling and taking non-recyclable trash or yard waste to a licensed landfill or a yard waste drop-off site. More information on these alternatives can be found on DNREC's web site, [www.dnrec.delaware.gov](http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov) and click on "Division of Air and Waste Management" and "Recycling" or contact the Solid Waste Branch at (302) 739-9403.

For more information on open burning, visit [www.awm.delaware.gov/Info/Pages/OpenBurningMain.aspx](http://www.awm.delaware.gov/Info/Pages/OpenBurningMain.aspx).